

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Department of Information Systems,
Business Statistics and Operations Management

Seminar Announcement

***When More is Less:
Understanding How to Leverage Expertise Diversity
Manifested in an Electronic Advice Network***

by

Mr Yongsuk Kim
Dept. of Information, Risk & Operations Management
McCombs School of Business
University of Texas at Austin

Date: Tuesday, 25 January 2011
Time: 11:00 – 12:30 pm
Venue: Room 4379, ISOM Conference Room (Lift 17/18)

~~~~~ All interested are welcome ~~~~~

**Abstract:** In this study, I investigate under what conditions and how the expertise diversity manifested in a firm-hosted electronic advice network might lead to higher (or lower) performance outcomes of the advice seeker. An electronic advice network is formed when an advice seeker seeks expertise from different domains by initiating an online discussion thread that spans multiple virtual communities (VC). Questioning the prevalent, but poorly supported, assumption in the VC literature that the advice seeker would greatly benefit when exposed to diverse expertise of electronic weak ties, I argue that expertise diversity (determined by the differences in discussion participants' domain expertise) can not only promote but also hinder the advice seeker's performance, mediated through learning, depending on the level of collective elaboration. Collective elaboration (CE) refers to a knowledge sharing process in which discussion participants articulate their advice not just in depth but also in relation to others'. Using mixed methods, I conducted a field study of 190 discussion threads comprising technical advice seeking for problem solving or better decision making in a global company. As hypothesized, a negative relationship was found between expertise diversity and learning and, subsequently, performance in discussions with low CE whereas a positive relationship was found in discussions with high CE. In addition, participants were more likely to engage in higher levels of CE, the more they were also members of the various communities represented by other participants in the given discussion, but engage in lower levels of CE, the more they had only participated in their own domain communities. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings will be discussed during the talk.

**Biography:** Yongsuk Kim is a doctoral candidate in Information Systems at the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. He also holds a master's degree in Human Computer Interaction (HCI) from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Prior to graduate studies, He worked at IBM Business Consulting Services for a few years. In his research, he uses quantitative and qualitative research methods to investigate IT-enabled knowledge sharing and coordination issues in globally distributed organizations. His main research area lies in knowledge management with specific interests to IT-enabled platforms such as virtual communities and other social media, virtual teams, and online social networks.